

**Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan
Emergency Support Function #2**

**Emergency Support Function – No. 2
COMMUNICATIONS**

Primary Agency:

Virginia Information Technologies Agency

VERT ESF Branch:

Infrastructure Support Branch

Support Agencies:

- Department of Aviation
- Department of Emergency Management
- Department of Forestry
- Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
- Department of Military Affairs
- Virginia State Police
- Virginia Department of Transportation
- Marine Resources Commission
- Office of Emergency Medical Services, Department of Health
- Other State Agencies with telecommunications capabilities.

Introduction

Purpose

Emergency Support Function (ESF) – 2 – Communications ensures the provision of adequate communications to support state, local, and private-sector response efforts during an incident.

Scope

ESF-2 coordinates state actions to provide the required telecommunications, and the restoration of the telecommunications infrastructure. ESF-2 supports all state agencies in the procurement and coordination of all telecommunications services from the telecommunications and information technology (IT) industry during an incident response.

Communication is information transfer and involves the technology associated with the representation, transfer, interpretation, and processing of data among persons, places, and machines. It includes transmission, emission, or reception of signs, signals, writing, images, and sounds or intelligence

of any nature by wire, radio, optical, or other electromagnetic systems.

Mission

The mission of the coordinating agency and primary and supporting agencies is to provide the capability for the reception and transmission of priority, formal message traffic for the Virginia Emergency Operations Center (VEOC) on a 24-hour-a-day basis; to receive and transmit prioritized emergency message traffic to localities and state agencies in support of imminent or actual emergency operations; and to relay warnings, weather advisories, and intelligence information on a prioritized basis.

Organization

The following federal and state agencies, public agencies, and volunteer organizations provide emergency communications for the state:

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A. Federal Agencies

1. Army Corps of Engineers
2. Department of Homeland Security; Commander, Fifth Coast Guard District (CCGDFIVE)
3. Department of Homeland Security; Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
4. Department of Homeland Security; National Communications System (NCS)
5. National Weather Service (NWS)

B. State Agencies

1. Department of Aviation (DOAV)
2. Department of Emergency Management (VDEM)
3. Department of Forestry (DOF)
4. Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF)
5. Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA)
6. Department of Military Affairs (DMA)
7. Department of State Police (VSP)
8. Department of Transportation (VDOT)
9. Marine Resources Commission (MRC)
10. Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS), Department of Health (VDH)
11. Other state agencies with telecommunications capabilities.

C. Public Organizations

1. American National Red Cross (ANRC)
2. Commercial telephone companies within the state.

D. Volunteer Organizations

1. Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES)
2. Virginia Defense Force (VADF)
3. Virginia Wing, Civil Air Patrol (CAP)

Concept of Operations

A. Communications within the Commonwealth of Virginia are dependent upon user and leased commercial telephone lines, the Virginia State Police microwave radio system, various state agencies with telecommunications assets, and other limited back-up radio systems. These systems provide some redundancy to ensure the availability of communications during an emergency or disaster situation. The ability to provide sufficient communications to conduct emergency operations could become limited due to systems being damaged, destroyed, overloaded, or otherwise rendered inoperable. Private sector assets such as cellular and satellite telephones and leased radio systems provide some capacity; however, their availability is not guaranteed during severe crisis situations or disasters.

B. The VDEM Communications Officer, in coordination with the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA), will integrate the communications capabilities of available federal and state agencies, public and volunteer organizations into a viable communications system to support emergency and disaster operations. The combined capabilities of the above-listed organizations comprise the state emergency communications organization. The VDEM Communications Officer is the Commonwealth's Emergency Communications Coordinator, and upon direction of the Governor, will assume control over all state telecommunications assets.

C. Commercial telephone systems (including common user, and full-time, leased point-to-point circuits), in conjunction with the Virginia State

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Police microwave radio system, will be the primary means of directing and coordinating all emergency and disaster operations. RACES and CAP radio nets will provide the secondary communication means for statewide direction and coordination of emergency and disaster operations. State agencies, local governments, and public and volunteer organizations will be used to support actual on-scene operations and to provide auxiliary communications on a local or sub-regional basis.

- D. Weather information will be received from the National Weather Service (NWS) over the NWS National Weather Wire Service system or the National warning system (NAWAS), Virginia warning system (VAWAS), or Washington area warning system (WAWAS) circuits. This information will be relayed throughout the state, as needed, over the VAWAS or WAWAS voice systems or the VCIN system. Weather information will also be disseminated to the general public over the NWS VHF-FM National Weather Radio (NWR) network.
- E. Emergency Alert System (EAS)
1. The Commonwealth has statewide coverage over the EAS network, which provides the President and the federal government, the Governor and the state government, and local government officials with an expeditious means of communicating with the general public during an imminent or actual disaster or emergency. The EAS system is also used to disseminate weather warnings to the general public, as well as AMBER (America's Missing Broadcast Emergency Response) Alert activations at the request of law enforcement for missing/abducted children. In this context, it serves to supplement the NWS VHF-FM

National Weather Radio (NWR) network. National and state level EAS messages will be automatically relayed via VAWAS and VCIN to local governments.

Types of EAS messages include:

- a. **National Level**
Emergency action notification messages will be released upon request of the White House through the National Primary network. The emergency message is disseminated from the originating point on a dedicated network to the control points of the major radio and television networks and is further disseminated to network affiliates within the state. State Primary and State Relay stations receive the Emergency Action Message and pass it to the state and local level stations.
- b. **State Level**
The State Primary Station will relay emergency information, issued by state authorities, in accordance with the EAS Operational Plan (copy held by all EAS member stations). State Relay stations will relay the message to the local-level stations.
- c. **Local Level**
Emergency action messages originated by local jurisdiction authorities will be disseminated to the station designated as the Local Primary station for that jurisdiction. These messages and other emergency information will be relayed in accordance with the state EAS Plan.

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- d. **Severe Weather Events**
The dissemination arrangements for severe weather warnings originate from the officer in charge of the National Weather Service Office to the Local Primary station for the EAS operational area affected by a weather event. Information is disseminated as outlined in the state and local EAS plans.
 - e. **AMBER Alert**
The EAS may be activated for an AMBER (America's Missing Broadcast Emergency Response) Alert at the request of a law enforcement agency. The Commonwealth of Virginia AMBER Alert Plan describes the procedures for a statewide AMBER Alert activation. The Virginia State Police is designated as the official clearinghouse for state level AMBER Alerts.
- 2. The VEOC will, in coordination with the State Primary Station, develop and keep current procedures, to include authentication, to ensure that the Governor can transmit emergency information to the public. Local governments should also develop plans, to include authentication, with local EAS stations, which will enable the head of local government to transmit emergency information to the public.
- F. Federal emergency communications assistance is available both on a day-to-day and on an emergency basis to support routine and non-routine operations.
- 1. FEMA emergency communications assistance, consisting of FNARS (FEMA National Radio System) as well as NAWAS (National Warning System) is available on a daily basis as well as for disasters and emergencies. FEMA has Mobile Emergency Response System (MERS) assets available to assist the state in large-scale disasters.
 - 2. Coast Guard emergency communications assistance, consisting of radio, telephone, and teletype is available to support port safety, marine environmental protection, and search and rescue operations. Immediate communications assistance to support marine or aircraft disasters and emergencies is also available.
 - 3. Requests for additional federal emergency communications assistance shall be made by the VDEM Communications Officer in accordance with the National Communications System (NCS) National Plan for Communications Support in Emergencies and Major Disasters. The National Response Plan (NRP) details communication assistance under ESF #2, with the NCS as the primary agency.
 - 4. The VDEM Communications Officer will request that Federal emergency communications assistance be terminated after the essential communication needs of the disaster or emergency have been met and these services are no longer required.
 - 5. The SHARES (Shared Resources) Coordination Network (SCN) is available on a 24-hour basis to provide an emergency communications link to support intra- or interagency mission requirements. To use SHARES, certain conditions must exist to include information supporting

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national security and emergency preparedness requirements, the preservation of life and property, and when the primary means of communications must be inoperative or unavailable for use.

of radio communications between the VEOC and local government EOCs in accordance with Federal Communications Commission Rules and Regulations and the RACES Communications Plan.

G. Tasks

1. The Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA) will coordinate with the commercial telecommunications sector on telecommunication requirements, installation, and maintenance between state primary, regional, and local offices. VITA will monitor the status of telecommunications within the Commonwealth and will keep the VEOC informed as to restoration efforts and needs requirements of the industry to effect rapid restoration of service to state and other critical facilities.
2. Civil Air Patrol (CAP) will provide tactical radio communications between the VEOC and local government EOCs as well as CAP field units in accordance with Federal Communications Commission Rules and Regulations and Mutual Aid agreements.
3. RACES will provide the secondary fixed formal message traffic means

4. The state agencies listed herein will provide tactical communications support for their own operations and emergency radio back-up communications as required.
5. The American National Red Cross will provide back-up communications in accordance with mutual aid agreements.

- H. State, regional, and local government communications officers are responsible for the overall operating condition of their equipment. Supporting state agencies, public and private communications systems are responsible for the operating condition of their equipment.

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References

Civil Air Patrol Communications Manual (CAPM 100-1)

*Commander, Fifth Coast Guard District Operations Plan No. 1 (YR.), Annex P
(Communications)*

Federal Communications Commission Rules and Regulations

FEMA CPG 1-40 and CPG 1-41, Emergency Alert System (May 1996)

Master State Plan for Public Telecommunications

National Plan for Communications Support in Emergencies and Major Disasters

National Warning System (NAWAS) Operations Manual (CPG 1-16)

Shared Resources Handbook (NCS Handbook 3-3-1, SHARES Directory)

Virginia Emergency Medical Services Communications Plan

Virginia Law Enforcement Communications Plan

Virginia Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services Plan and the RACES MOU

Virginia Warning System (VAWAS) Operations Manual

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Action Checklist

1. Routine Operations:

- a. Revise and update plans, SOPs, contact lists, and checklists.
- b. Train staff (permanent and auxiliary), test and exercise.
- c. Inspect/maintain equipment; develop emergency repair capability.
- d. Participate in EAS planning and operational activities; assist in public education and information efforts.

2. Increased Readiness:

A natural or man-made disaster is threatening some part of the state.

- a. Communications Watch Level
 - (1) Alert Operations staff; make notifications as directed or required.
 - (2) Review plans, SOPs, checklists; make changes as needed.
 - (3) Perform equipment readiness checks; review personnel status.
- b. Initial Alert Level
 - (1) Provide notifications as directed by Operations.
 - (2) Initiate communications net check-ins; establish contacts with other agencies as required.
 - (3) Determine altered staffing; provide for VEOC and field operations staffing plans (cancel leave, etc.).
 - (4) Initiate teleconferencing and mass-fax capabilities.
 - (5) Alert augmentation staff to prepare for duty.
 - (6) Begin event-specific record keeping activities.
- c. Advanced Alert Level
 - (1) Implement alternate staffing scheduled (0800-2000, 1200-2400, 2000-0800).
 - (2) Ensure that local situation reports are received and distributed to Operations and Information and Planning.
 - (3) Assist with preparations for arrival of ERT-A and expanded VEOC (telephone lines and equipment).
 - (4) Obtain communications equipment for assessment teams; ensure compatibility, etc.; inventory/record on arrival.
 - (5) Review actions taken; assess readiness; report status to Operations.

3. Response Operations:

- a. Mobilization Phase
 - Conditions continue to worsen requiring full-scale mitigation and preparedness activities.
 - (1) Fully augment VEOC Communications Center; staff mobile communications element (Mobile EOC, Communications Trailers, and Communications Support).
 - (2) Activate auxiliary staff as needed (RACES, ARES, CAP, etc.).
 - (3) Hot-check-out communications equipment and systems; continue network check-ins.

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- (4) Issue communications equipment to assessment teams; provide orientation briefs as needed; continue inventory/check out record keeping procedures.
- (5) Contact ESF #2 state/federal representatives and outline any known communications shortfalls/requirements.
- (6) Ensure EAS linkages to the VEOC are tested and ready.
- (7) Assess readiness level; advise Operations of status.

b. Emergency Phase

Disaster strikes. An emergency response is required to save lives and protect property.

- (1) Maintain communications links with the affected localities and state agencies. Distribute situation reports and assistance requests to Operations and Information and Planning for action and tracking.
- (2) Determine communications system(s) status and report status to Operations and ESF-2.
- (3) Dispatch mobile units as directed; set up field operations and communications links back to the VEOC.
- (4) Provide communications support to field teams; initiate requests for ESF-2 for additional assistance.
- (5) Fully activate state-level RACES if not already done earlier; report status to FCC as needed; request additional spectrum/channels for emergency operations.
- (6) Initiate expedient repairs as required/capable; activate alternate systems as required.
- (7) Review staffing plans and revise as needed.

c. Emergency Relief Phase

Assistance is provided to affected individuals and organizations. Stopgap measures (such as tent cities and potable water trucks) are implemented in order to provide essential services. Preliminary damage assessment surveys are conducted. This phase ends when the locality is no longer in an official state of emergency.

- (1) Receive SITREPs/assistance requests and distribute to Operations and Information and Planning.
- (2) Ensure communications links to affected localities and forward operational sites.
- (3) Assist ESF-2 with restoration activities.
- (4) Ensure contact with FEMA and NCS; request any additional support through ESF-2 as required.
- (5) Support communications needs of assessment teams.
- (6) Assess overall communications systems status in coordination with ESF-2; report to Operations.
- (7) Begin preliminary damage assessment activities for communications infrastructure.

4. Recovery Operations

Essential facilities and services are restored. Displaced persons return to their homes. Federal disaster assistance programs are implemented. "Normal" conditions are restored. Severely damaged structures are rebuilt or demolished and replaced. The damaged parts of the transportation, water, and communications infrastructure are replaced. The economy is restored. The duration of this period may extend for two years or more, depending upon the severity of the disaster.

- a. Continue to maintain liaison with the EOCs of impacted localities.

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- b. Assist recovery operations' communications requirements; liaison with ESF-2 for additional federal assistance.
- c. Continue/refine damage assessment activities.
- d. Provide support to SCO/DSCO in setup and operations at JFO.
- e. Document repair/other activities for reimbursement.
- f. Coordinate with ESF-2 on scale-down of federal assistance.
- g. Return to normal staffing at the VEOC Communications Center in coordination with Operations.
- h. Return excess equipment as situation allows; cancel extra emergency contracts/rental arrangements.
- i. Terminate emergency communications networks, as appropriate, in coordination with ESF-2.
- j. Participate in after-action reviews.
- k. Release auxiliary communications staff; deactivate RACES networks as normal systems come back on line.
- l. Return to mitigation and preparedness activities.